



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

September 21, 2010

*Via Electronic Mail*

Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, Chair  
City Council Transportation Committee  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 415  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
[Councilman.Rosendahl@lacity.org](mailto:Councilman.Rosendahl@lacity.org)

**Re: Opposition to Council Motion 10-0996 to Extend Taxi Company Franchises by Five (5) Years**

Dear Councilmember Rosendahl:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council, I write to express strong opposition to the June 2010 city council motion (10-0996) proposing to extend the taxi company franchises for five (5) years beyond the current expiration date of December 31, 2010. By preserving the status quo, this proposal fails to cure the current flaws in the Los Angeles taxi system. We highly encourage the City Council to take this opportunity to make real changes to the system to allow greening and a more economically vibrant taxi system.

The taxi industry—regulated by the City as a public utility—currently is characterized by taxi workers toiling long hours for low pay, ineffective use of taxis in city and regional transportation planning, and questionable taxi company management practices as documented in a 2007 city controller audit. Especially given that the taxi industry is a City public utility, this status quo must not continue.

Rather than extend the taxi company franchises for five years, now is the time to move forward with the City's plan to conduct a big picture review of the taxi public utility to look at alternate structures that would improve working conditions and create a state-of-the-art green taxi system that would be a national model. The Taxicab Commission many months ago adopted a motion to hire a consultant for the City who would do a top-down evaluation of our current taxi industry and look at alternative models, some of which other cities have adopted with excellent results; improvements in customer service, maintaining meter rates, greening the taxi industry, and alleviating low earnings and harsh conditions for drivers. It is imperative that the City move forward with a Request for Proposal that contains a scope of work as outlined by the Taxicab Commission in order to live up to the City's commitment to living wages, economic vibrancy, environmental sustainability, and world-class public transit.

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Los Angeles has been a national leader in green job creation and urban sustainability. The city should not overlook the taxi system to enhance this reputation. By utilizing taxicabs more efficiently, the city can reduce environmental impacts, enhance the use of public transportation, and improve the quality of life for Angelenos through the reduction of traffic congestion. In the process, taxi drivers' working conditions could be improved through the overall professionalization and economic development of the taxicab public utility.

This opportunity would be lost if the existing taxi company franchises are extended for five years. With the scheduled expiration of the taxi company franchises at the end of 2010, the City can create a new 21<sup>st</sup> century taxi public utility by exercising its plenary power to mandate the taxi companies implement an array of green environmental strategies in order to have the privilege of operating in Los Angeles – and simultaneously promote workforce development and job creation amongst the taxi workforce while advancing sustainable public transportation strategies.

We urge your committee to support the efforts to enhance Los Angeles' taxi system, including the efforts of the Los Angeles Taxi Workers Alliance in its efforts to create a just and vibrant taxi industry for all stakeholders, especially hardworking taxi workers who provide an essential public service. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to working people throughout the City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adriano L. Martinez". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Adriano Martinez  
Project Attorney